

Flanagan - Int. 2879 or Sater - Int. 2800



## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### INFORMATION SERVICE

UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release NOVEMBER 2, 1958

#### INCREASING INTEREST SHOWN IN BIG-GAME DISPOSAL SALES

Small communities are getting interested in bison for display purposes, some farmers with small acreages are beginning to look upon the bison as a potential livestock animal, and professional cattle buyers are bidding higher prices for the Texas longhorn, the Department of the Interior reports in summarizing the 1958 big-game surplus disposal program.

Surplus big-game disposal from the National Wildlife Refuges is under the direction of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

Surplus bison are donated to public parks or are sold alive or butchered at prices established annually; the longhorns are sold at public auction. Some elk are included in the disposal program but these are assigned primarily to public agencies.

The highest price paid for a longhorn at this year's auction was \$313.22 for a 95-pound steer at the Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge, in Nebraska, where longhorns sold for \$4,177. In 1957 the 33 longhorns sold for \$3,566 and in 1956, 33 longhorns sold for \$2,384. The hundredweight prices at the 1958 Fort Niobrara sale ranged from \$16.75 for a group of three steers to \$23.60 for three yearling heifers.

At Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge in Oklahoma, the top auction price was 95 for a large steer. At this sale 68 longhorns were sold for \$9,785. One meat supply company bid in eight animals for \$1,372.50. Another bidder bought eight animals for \$1,315. Top price in the 1957 sale was \$500 for a cow but the averages in 1957 and 1956 were well below the 1958 average price.

The surplus disposal announcement listed 272 bison for sale—\$125 for a yearling (live only); \$150 for mature animals, alive; or \$140 to \$180 (mature) butchered. Public parks and zoos seeking display animals get preference. More

than 1,000 inquiries and requests poured into Bureau offices. Most of the requests were for complete information on the surplus sale with no indication of the inquirer's direct interest. Many of them expressed interest strictly in the culinary prospects. Approximately 100, most of them proprietors of farms from 45 acres to 450 acres, indicated a desire to consider buffalo for propagation purposes. These requests were literally from all parts of the country---New Hampshire, Florida, northern Washington, southern California and a dozen States in between.

Bureau officials, when sending out the informational materials, especially to those with small acreages who wanted live animals, included a note of caution, warning that the sleepy-looking buffalo can be dangerous and advising about his complete disrespect for the average farm fence if he decides to move.

To the requests from 4-H Club members for buffalo for projects, Bureau officials gave a courteous but firm "No". A number of requests from student groups for mascots had to be rejected since bison and school parades are not compatible.

Since surplus disposal is the responsibility of the Bureau's Regional and refuge offices those interested were directed to file actual applications in those offices.

Surplus bison have been sold, but since delivery depends on the convenience of the buyer and on conditions at the refuge, disposal usually extends to the Christmas holidays or beyond. The surplus bison are sold at Fort Niobrara and Wichita mountains Refuges, National Bison Range, Montana, and Sullys Hill National Game preserve in North Dakota.

x x x